

America's
Political Prisoners
in South Vietnam

A "WHITE PAPER" ON THE TOTAL SUPPRESSION
OF ALL POLITICAL DISSENT BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Prepared and published by the
Fellowship of Reconciliation

Throughout our history, Americans have been devoted to the idea of freedom. Even when precise definitions of freedom have varied, its broad outlines have remained clear and unblurred, and they have always included the right of citizens in a democratic country to think their own thoughts and to express them, even when their ideas ran counter to majority opinion or were opposed to the government and its policies. Freedom of speech, of worship, of the press, the right to petition government for the redress of wrongs — all guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution — have been accepted by most Americans as the very essence of liberty. We have seen as a legitimate function of government the obligation to provide an atmosphere under which citizens could exercise these freedoms without harassment or fear, and we have been willing to go to war to defend them for ourselves or to secure them for others.

For the past fourteen years, our government has invoked our dedication to freedom and our belief that it should be extended to all mankind to justify the war in Vietnam. The war's origins have been explained as an assault by world communism on the freedom of the South Vietnamese people; only by resisting that assault could those freedoms be retained and similar assaults on other free peoples discouraged.

This paper is not a discussion of the inaccuracy of that description; its fraudulence has been dissected repeatedly and authoritatively in many works easily available.* This is an attempt to disclose the extent to which the South Vietnamese government has become a totally authoritarian, repressive regime, one that not only fails to protect the freedom of its citizens, but depends for its very existence on the total denial of freedom.

Tens of thousands of Vietnamese people, some of them ordinary citizens, many of them students, or political, religious and cultural leaders, languish in the prisons of South Vietnam. Some of them have gone through travesties of trials and been sentenced to long terms at hard labor; most have been imprisoned for months or years without trial, without even knowing what charges are preferred against them.

Their crime is that they have spoken for peace. (In South Vietnam, to stand for peace, or neutralism, is officially and legally considered to be the equivalent of being a communist and a supporter of the enemy, and is punishable by prison, exile or even death.) They have opposed the present government as unrepresentative (it came to power as the result of a military coup and was confirmed in power as the result of a 34.8% vote in an election marked by open and cynical fraud and the disenfranchisement of a great many citizens) and insisted that the will of the people would be better served by a government that would negotiate an end to the war and some kind of coalition rule.

South Vietnam's prisoners are not irresponsibles or subversives. At least 8,000 of them are Buddhist leaders, mostly monks and nuns. Thousands of them are students, including the leaders of the official student organizations in all five of the country's universities. The country's leading poets and singers are in jail or in exile; its writers, labor union leaders, university teachers have either been terrorized into silence or imprisoned.

*See, for instance, *Vietnam Folly* by Senator Ernest F. Gruening and Herbert Beaser; and *Vital Interest Or Tragic Mistake?* by N. Norman Royall.

Pam

Vietnam

Soon after the 1967 election, the government even went so far as to arrest three of the aspirants for the presidency: one has been sentenced to five years at hard labor, another is still held without trial, a third was held under house arrest for almost a year and is now in exile.

No one can say with certainty how many of these political prisoners there are. Conservative estimates put the figure at a minimum of 20,000. Some 5,000 were imprisoned after the Buddhist-led "struggle movement" in Hue and Danang in 1966, and they have not been released. More than 6,000 other prisoners were released at the time of President Nguyen Van Thieu's inauguration in 1967, and a high official of the government acknowledged that they were "only a tiny fraction" of the total.

South Vietnam's political prisoners are prisoners of the United States. Even though there are attempts to show a facade of independence on the part of the South Vietnamese government, that government is dependent for its very survival on United States economic, political and military support. This has been true since Ngo Dinh Diem was brought from exile in the United States to supplant France's puppet emperor, Bao Dai, in 1955, and since the same Diem was toppled and assassinated in 1963 after American officials withdrew support from him. General Thieu's predecessor and present vice-president, Gen. Nguyen Cao Ky, overthrew the Buddhist Premier Quat with American connivance, after Quat had released many political prisoners and declared his intention of seeking an end to the war, and General Ky was kept in power in 1966 when American planes enabled Ky's paratroopers to crush the Buddhist-led struggle movement in Hue and Danang.

The United States pays the wages of the troops that keep Thieu and Ky in office and of the jailors who keep their opponents behind bars. Now that the United States has at long last decided that the war in Vietnam must come to an end, the Thieu-Ky government, intransigent and irreconcilable, delays negotiations while both Americans and Vietnamese continue to be killed. This war, which began as a revolt against French imperialism, then became a civil war between two groups of contending Vietnamese, finally turned into an American war, fought for American purposes, with American troops and planes. It has taken on a life of its own, which in the name of freedom, crushes freedom, and in the name of defending South Vietnam, is systematically destroying it. As the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh has said repeatedly, "What we Vietnamese need most is to be saved from salvation."

It is not easy to document such conditions in a country where both the legal (South Vietnamese) and actual (American) holders of power are hostile to all critical observation. Nevertheless, material is available. Much of it, though not all, has been published in the American press, particularly in the *New York Times*. Some has been made available to the Fellowship of Reconciliation through its representatives and contacts in South Vietnam; some has come from the Unified Buddhist Church and the Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Association; some has come from the Vietnamese student associations and the Students' Struggle Movement for Democracy, whose seventeen leaders were arrested and forced into the army after being on a hunger strike; some has come from devoted Roman Catholic priests and laymen who are equally committed to peace for their suffering country.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is not a conventionally political organization. It publishes this paper because it has been privileged to have warm and affectionate relations with the Buddhists and

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Catholics who are the victims of the suppression. It publishes it because the corruption of American values represented by these developments is much more than a political fact: it is a moral tragedy for all our people. It publishes it finally with the comment with which the Ven. Thich Thien Minh, head of the Buddhist Vien Hoa Dao, replied to the question of whether Buddhist activities had not been political:

"Sir, we are in ruined houses and the surroundings are alive with wild beasts and fire. We scream. It is the least reaction of those still possessing the instinct of self-preservation."

I

"Only the government has the right to pronounce on the question of peace." — President Nguyen Van Thieu

The practice of imprisoning or exiling rival political leaders has always been one of the hallmarks of authoritarian regimes, and many Americans were shocked when, shortly after the much-touted "democratic" elections in South Vietnam in 1967, the Thieu-Ky government began to arrest former officeholders, labor leaders, and even several presidential candidates. There was little doubt, however, that President Thieu and Vice-President Ky were acting in their own best interests. Even before the election, one potential candidate was assassinated, two presidential aspirants were barred, and those who did become candidates (except for Thieu and Ky) were severely restricted in their campaigning. Great numbers of South Vietnamese were disenfranchised, and of those who finally voted, only 34.8% voted for the Thieu-Ky ticket. Some 65% divided their votes among the eleven other candidates, all but one of whom stood for some kind of peaceful settlement of the war. The three runner-up candidates, Dzu, Suu and Huong, all pro-peace, received 37% of the vote. (It is interesting to note that in most democratic countries that are accustomed to multiple candidacies for government office, run-off elections are held when the leading candidate fails to receive a majority of the popular vote.) It is unlikely that the Thieu-Ky government could have survived had it not adopted its present policy of imprisonment and oppression of popular leaders.

Following are summaries of news stories and other reports of the suppression of political dissent in South Vietnam:

New York Times, Feb. 24, 1968, Saigon (AP): Reported the arrest of Vu Huong Khanh, a presidential candidate who finished eighth in the 1967 presidential election, and of labor union leaders, Tran Huu Guyen and Vo Van Tai. Also several Buddhist monks. At least twenty persons were thought to have been arrested since the twenty-first of February. No reasons stated by Government for the arrests, but officials mentioned a list allegedly compiled by the Vietcong of persons who might figure in a coalition government.

York Gazette and Daily, March 1, 1968, Saigon (AP): Reported that the arrests of twenty government opponents had the approval of the cabinet. Reported the arrests of runner-up presidential candidate Truong Dinh Dzu, of former Economy Minister, Au Truong Tanh, and of militant Buddhist leader, Thich Tri Quang, along with other arrests of anti-government figures.

From a report from Vietnam by John Sullivan for the Peace Education Division of the AFSC, May 9, 1968: "Since Tet the regime has moved through periods of great uneasiness, relaxation, and a

resumption of tension (now current). These periods have been marked by arrests, releases, re-arrests and new arrests. No one knows how many political prisoners there are in South Vietnam. . . . People are arrested without warrants, jailed without interrogation, held without bail, sometimes incommunicado, squeezed into too small jail spaces. I am told that some of them suffer torture, either from hot electric wires or from a thick wet burlap held over the mouth and nose nearly to the point of suffocation.

"The most prominent prisoners who were arrested soon after Tet were: Au Truong Thanh, a lawyer who was a cabinet minister and resigned under a previous regime;* Truong Dinh Dzu, like Thanh a lawyer, and former candidate for president; Tran Thuc Ling, a juvenile court judge (now suspended) and author of ten books on the law, citizenship, and individual rights and responsibilities; and Thich Tri Quang, leader of the 'militant Buddhists.' (They) were held in a house at 213 Cong Ly, one of several owned by General Loan, the police chief. . . . People say that Linh was arrested because a document found 'on a dead V.C.' said that Linh would govern Saigon in the event of an NLF victory.

"On April 13, after eight weeks in detention, and following a fifteen-day hunger strike, Thanh, Linh and Dzu were released. Subsequently Dzu gave an interview to an American journalist and expressed the need for a nationalist coalition government including NLF and non-NLF leaders. Shortly thereafter he went to St. Paul's clinic . . . in Saigon and was reported to be under doctor's orders to receive no visitors

"A censored AP dispatch printed in the Saigon press May 3 said that on May 1 police arrived at the clinic at 10:30 a.m. and placed Dzu under arrest. He refused to leave. An hour later they returned and said he would be taken against his will if he refused to go quietly. He went in a police ambulance to National Police Headquarters. Mrs. Dzu said that he was taken despite signed statements from three doctors, including two from the national police, that he had heart trouble and was too ill to be moved for several weeks.... She was refused permission to see her husband at police headquarters and said she would not protest. 'What is the use of protesting in this country?' she was quoted as saying."

New York Times, May 2, 1968: Reported Dzu's arrest "on charges of urging the formation of a coalition government as a step toward peace."

Tin Tuong, Newsletter of Overseas Buddhist Association, Paris, October, 1968: "In August, 1968, ..Truong Dinh Dzu was sentenced to five years of forced labor...for proposing that the NLF be included in negotiations for peace, nothing more."

Newsweek, May 13, 1968: Reported that just after the Tet offensive, respected Saigon lawyer, Trinh Dinh Thao disappeared, returned three weeks later and summoned forty Vietnamese landowners, professionals and intellectuals to his wooded estate near Saigon for a meeting to discuss a provisional regime of "patriotic nationalists" to negotiate peace with Hanoi. After the meeting Thao and his guests disappeared. . ." (presumably into hiding).

From a letter from a correspondent in Hong Kong, June 12, 1968: "Names of political prisoners who were arrested because of their struggle for the elections of the National Assembly (1966): Dinh Tan Nham, Ho Dac Dung, Nguyen Van Sang, Ho Hieu, Do Duc Can, Ha Ngoc Tue, Ho Quang Nhat, To Ngoc Phu, Huynh Dinh Sat, Nguyen Viet Bad, Nguyen Tang Dien, Ngo Thi Hong Van, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Le, Pham Thi Huong, Mrs. Pham Thi Ngoc Trang, Pham Thi Chau, Le Thanh Quoc, Anh Linh, Anh Cu."

*And who had been a presidential aspirant, ruled off the ballot in late July.

Unresponsive as it is to requests for information about how many political prisoners it is currently holding, the South Vietnamese Government, through its own actions and edicts has provided some of the most unassailable evidence obtainable that their numbers must be in the tens of thousands. The exiled Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, has estimated that there are at least 20,000, and Vo Van Ai, Paris representative of the Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Association supports this estimate; however, the Government itself has asked the Assembly for funds to feed an average daily number of 12,000 detainees (see below), and the *Washington Post News Service* reports new arrests at the rate of 2,000 daily in Saigon alone.

York Gazette and Daily, June 28, 1967: Quotes *The Washington Post* as saying that American officials estimate that thousands of political prisoners are being held by the Ky government in jails and detention camps throughout South Vietnam. "Vast numbers," according to a document issued by the U.S. Agency for International Development in November, 1966, "have never been tried...and have no idea when or how they will be released."

Vietnam Guardian, August 23, 1967: Quotes a resolution passed by the convention of August 18: "The present Government must put an end to all unjust measures and verdicts violating the rights of citizenship concerning especially Buddhist movements for democratic institutions in 1966."

(But in October, 1968, Vo Van Ai in an Italian television broadcast said that more than 8,000 Buddhists were still held in prisons. On October 21, 1968, in refusing a request from the Unified Buddhist Congregation of Vietnam to send a delegation outside the country to explain the Buddhist position regarding peace, President Thieu said, "Only the Government has the right to pronounce on the question of peace," and that any other who does will be led before a tribunal. See Section II.)

New York Times, Nov. 4, 1967, Saigon: Reported a Government announcement of the release of 6,270 prisoners of various categories during the National Day Celebration. Government refused to disclose how many people remained in prison, but a "ranking official" described the 6,270 as only a "tiny fraction" of the total. 1,120 of the freed prisoners were described as "political detainees," i.e. people who have been held, generally without trial for periods up to three years. None of the freed prisoners included students and Buddhists arrested in the 1966 demonstrations.

New York Times, Dec. 18, 1967, Saigon: Reported that soon after the inauguration of the Thieu government, the South Vietnamese Senate began to debate a bill which would mandate the release of "all the thousands of political prisoners" taken into custody in the last dozen years, with the exception of Viet Cong.

This dispatch seems to corroborate the description, in the earlier *Times* report, of the 6,270 as a "tiny fraction" of the total. Nothing further, incidentally, has been published about the bill under consideration by the Senate, and, as the 1968 reports came in, the arrests and suppression continued:

York Gazette and Daily, Nov. 13, 1968, (CPS): Reports that in January, 1968, when President Thieu introduced his 1968 budget, he "stunned" the National Assembly with an item requesting \$670,000 to feed 12,000 citizens whom the government expected to have under "temporary detention" on a "daily basis."

Washington Post News Service, Sept. 18, 1968: Also reports Thieu's January request for funds to feed a daily number of 12,000 civilians. Adds that arrests at present are at the rate of 2,000 a day in Saigon.

New York Times, Jan. 9, 1968 (UPI): Reports the arrest of about 100 peasants in the Danang produce market, Jan. 8, by South Vietnamese national policemen, for protesting against U.S. bombing and the American military presence in South Vietnam. In making the arrest, the authorities said that the peasants had been forced to demonstrate by the Viet Cong. Most of the group were women and children, although it included four old men. The incident was described by A. Wilson Edwards of Louisville, Ky., an advisor to the Danang police chief, as the first manifestation of a new anti-Government campaign in the northern provinces of South Vietnam.

John Sullivan in his report for Vietnam for the Peace Education Division of the AFSC, May 9, 1968: "A Catholic priest, name withheld, said there is increased repression of the people. He spoke of a woman, seven months pregnant, being arrested. He also said that he had been told that in Hue before Tet there were 3,000 political prisoners, who were freed by the Front, but now there are 9,000 prisoners there."

Also from the Sullivan report: "The Lower House (of the Assembly) got quite noisy on the subject of illegal arrests by the national police after the Tet offensive. By a 49-39 vote, the Internal Affairs Committee was given the task of considering the matter as an agenda item. During the debate, Rep. Ly Qui Chung rushed to the platform, pointed his finger at Speaker Luong and said, 'You are not worthy to be a representative of this Legislature.'"

Vietnam Guardian, July 11, 1968: Reports a "decree law" signed by President Thieu, declaring "a state of war" throughout South Vietnam. Some of the measures provided for were: unannounced day or night searches, assignment of specific locations for persons considered dangerous to the national security; ban on demonstrations or assemblies which threaten security and public order; ban on possession or circulation of publications, documents and leaflets considered to be harmful to the national security; controlling and limiting transportation and movement; proclaiming martial law, depending on local security conditions. All persons violating the above measures to be brought to trial before the Military Field Court.

Saigon Daily News, Sept. 1, 1968: Under the heading, "President Thieu Denies Contempt for Lawmakers," reports that the Office of the President has just issued a communique asking that a delegation of deputies, *with a petition signed by more than one hundred deputies, requesting that a number of exiled people be permitted to return home*, not misunderstand his inability to have received them when they came to see him; he needed time to study the petition and urgent state business had taken him away.

News, Views from the Field, pub. under the auspices of the United Methodist Church, Washington, D.C., Sept.-Oct., 1968: Quotes the *Saigon Daily News* as saying that there are 100,000 persons in South Vietnamese jails at present. "The Can Tho provincial jail," wrote the *Saigon Daily News*, "was built by the French for 500 prisoners, is now used to keep over 2,000. Detainees have no room to sit. Legs of most prisoners have been swollen for having to stand on their feet to sleep.... They are also trained to live without washing like hippies (sic), although the Mekong River which flows across Can Tho never dries...."

From John Sullivan's report to the AFSC, May, 1968: "Police sources say that the numbers in the prisons have doubled since Tet. Some say that the present regime is more tyrannical than the Diem regime.... A former government official of near-cabinet rank says: The government has killed off the young promising leadership. Diem started it. But this regime is more active in killing off young leadership than Diem's was. This is a real police state. A judge was arrested without a warrant and reportedly without the prime minister's knowledge and consent. The prime minister questioned General Loan, head of the National Police, who said the judge had been arrested and put in jail. The prime minister said nothing further but meekly accepted Loan's response.... An American reporter, who asked that his name be withheld, said: 'The police state

is tougher now. The country is practically controlled by the military junta just as in the past. We don't know how many political prisoners there are...'. A prominent lawyer said: 'There is no free speech, free press or free assembly. Those who try it go to prison....'

"I would sum it up this way: Tet was followed by a repressive wave of arrests. Students generally were closely watched and the draft was used to control them. Many of those arrested, including some of Saigon's most prominent leaders, continue in detention. Nationalists are virtually unanimous in calling the Saigon regime a cruel police dictatorship...."

II

*"Men cannot be our enemies — even men called 'Viet Cong'!
If we kill men, what brothers have we left?"*

"With whom shall we live then?" — from "Condemnation," by Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Unified Buddhist Congregation, along with the allied Buddhist youth and student movements, represents the aspirations for peace and for a just and representative government of the majority of South Vietnamese people. Together with other neutralist groups, aligned neither with the Government nor the Viet Cong, it could well provide a "third force" to unite the South Vietnamese people, provided the Government of South Vietnam wanted either a cessation of the fighting or the establishment of democracy.

The Congregation has repeatedly urged negotiations among all warring parties in Vietnam. It has asked the communists in the North as well as those in the NLF to place less emphasis on ideological considerations and on the war and to maintain an open attitude toward peaceful cooperation with other elements in the population. It has called for people's participation in national affairs and for unity among political, religious and ideological groups. Buddhist youth groups have devoted themselves to refugee relief. Yet the Government of South Vietnam has persisted in regarding the Congregation as a subversive and dangerous movement. In 1967, under Thieu, the charter of the Unified Buddhist Congregation was revoked. A new and restrictive charter was drawn up, and the Government attempted the takeover of the Congregation through a puppet group of monks. The campaign of terrorism and imprisonment of Buddhist laymen and monks has continued and increased in virulence, as has the destruction of Buddhist property, both public and private.

Catholic laymen and priests have repeatedly joined with the Buddhists in anti-government demonstrations. Numerically inferior

*On March 2, 1967, an article by Father Nguyen Ngoc Lan, published in *Temoignage Chretien*, a Paris Catholic newspaper, described the violent attacks in the Saigon Press on Cardinal Cardijn, for having taken part in a Belgian demonstration for peace in Vietnam, and on all the Catholics in Vietnam who supported his position.

to the Buddhists, they have been somewhat protected from reprisals because of the preferred position held by the Catholic Church under the present government of South Vietnam, but, as John Sullivan writes in his report for the AFSC, "their relative safety is precarious* and they are a courageous group, seeking to improve the atmosphere for change and (to arrive at) a realistic evaluation of the status of Vietnam." Leaders of the group are the "Eleven Priests" who, in 1966, issued a manifesto calling for peace and have since been publishing a weekly paper, *Song Dao*, which circulates among the liberal thinkers of Saigon.

The following quotations are taken from John Sullivan's report of May, 1968:

"The following report covers the questions I was asked to investigate, plus some related material. Many of the Vietnamese names are omitted. In a few instances I have taken care to leave out or change significant identifying details about a person, lest I inadvertently expose (him) to reprisal by Saigon authorities. I regret that the situation in South Vietnam is such as to require this, but it is. No Vietnamese who expresses criticism of the Saigon regime to a visitor is safe. . . .

"The Buddhists bore the brunt of the post-Tet police oppression, with Thich Tri Quang and several older and many younger monks arrested and still held. Many thousands of people were arrested in all.

". . . In addition to Thich Tri Quang, four other Buddhist monks were arrested, including his top aides, Thich Ho Giac, Thich Phap Sieu, Thich Nhat Thuong, and Thich Lien Minh. Also 30 young monks...(and) many students from the Buddhist Van Hanh University.

"Both Buddhists and the small but realistic liberal Catholic wing were seeking 'a third way' quietly and carefully; any open activity would result in arrests, especially for Buddhists. . . .Open efforts to promote peace do not occur in Saigon these days

"Here is the story of a distinguished and important man whose wife is in prison; his name may not be used. Since Tet, he said, the government has arrested many people on suspicion and held them for weeks, or longer. Anyone who visits someone the government fears may get arrested. There are police traps all around. Many people arrested during Tet are still in prison. There are no beds in prison. Everyone is in a big room, sometimes 50 to 100 men or women lying on the floor. There are thousands of political prisoners; one cannot even guess how many. Many are detained in houses, rather than prisons. Sometimes people are kept six to twenty-four months without a charge against them; sometimes with no investigation. This man's wife has been in jail twenty-two months, having been arrested at the time of the Buddhist struggle movement in 1966. Reason for her incarceration: 'security.' Hundreds of appeals for her release have been made. No one responds. The appeals are not even acknowledged.

"Another woman, a Buddhist professor, has been arrested twice, once for signing an appeal for peace, once for having a copy of *Lotus In a Sea of Fire*.* She was not singled out for mistreatment, but prison conditions were atrocious. She was held in a cell measuring two meters by two meters along with ten other women. At night, six would stand and five would lie down, and then they would alternate."

*By Thich Nhat Hanh, Hill & Wang, N. Y.

From a letter received by FOR from a correspondent in Saigon, dated October 29, 1968:

"Thich Tri Quang, with his four companions, was released at the end of June, though he is still under surveillance. The Pagoda is surrounded by guards and if he goes out, there are two in front and four behind him. . . . There are probably more than twenty thousand in prison now and arrests are still being made."

Many of the accounts of Buddhist imprisonments and other repressive measures directed against Buddhists come from the Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Association, and are printed in *Tin Tuong*, the Association's newsletter. The following quotations are from this source:

April, 1968, summation of imprisonments by Vo Van Ai: "At this very moment, as I speak to you, 8,000 of the Buddhists who led the struggle in Da Nang, in Hue and in Saigon in the spring of 1966, are still in prison; 25 members of the Executive Central Committee of the Saigon University Students' Union (of which M. Ho Huu Nhat is President) are still in prison. Recently the leader of the South Vietnamese Buddhists, the Ven. Thich Tri Quang, as well as the Venerable Ho Giac, the Venerable Phap Sieu, the Venerable Nhat Thuong, and the Venerable Lieu Minh, together with intellectuals who represent the will to peace of our people, such as M. Au Truong Thanh, M. Truong Dinh Dzu, and a large number of the 65 Saigon University professors who signed the Tet cease-fire appeal, all these, in addition to thousands of ordinary people dedicated to the cause of peace, have been imprisoned by the military government, on the pretext of 'preserving their security.'"

October, 1968, from an interview with Vo Van Ai for a broadcast by Italian television: "...the Buddhists have been constantly subjected to oppression in the most barbarous fashion in South Vietnam. More than 8,000 are still held in prisons."

October, 1968, from the Manifesto of the Third Congress of the Unified Buddhist Congregation of Vietnam, August 18-20, 1968: ". . . Many nuns, monks, and Buddhist followers have been imprisoned arbitrarily and without judgment, and...cultural and social centers, places of worship, and other means for the propagation of the faith of the Congregation have deliberately been destroyed and taken over by the Government. Up to now, none of these people have been released, nor has any compensation been made for the destruction of these places."

October, 1968, from a report of the Buddhist Youth Movement in South Vietnam: "At the time of the 1966 Buddhist struggle for peace, liberty and democracy, many young Buddhists were exterminated, imprisoned or exiled by the Government. Up to now, none of these have been released. The life of the Venerable Thich Thien Minh, General Commissioner of Buddhist Youth, was gravely threatened; one group leader was killed point blank at the Vietnam Quoc Tu Pagoda, and the Headquarters of the Buddhist Youth (233 Hien Vuong St., Saigon) was attacked and taken over by the Government. Following the general offensive by the Front at the beginning of 1968 (Tet), more than 2,000 members were attacked. Thousands of others were imprisoned, tortured or exiled, and a great number of others were mobilized into the army and sent to the most remote regions."

October, 1968, from News Items in Tin Tuong: "On 14th August, Deputy Hoang Ho, journalist and director of an independent newspaper, denounced before Parliament the destruction of the Buu Lam Pagoda by the South Vietnamese air force. The Pagoda (built in 1702). . . was attacked non-stop by helicopters for four days (in March), again on 24th and 27th of June, and again on July 13, 1968, with the result that (it) was completely destroyed. The Deputy declared that this Pagoda was not a hideout for VC, nor a base for Government-prohibited stock."

"One thousand years of slavery under the Chinese aggressors,
 One hundred years of domination by Western invaders,
 Twenty years of ceaseless civil war —
 The fortune a mother bequeaths her children is a sad Vietnam."
 —from "Love Song of a Woman Maddened by War"
 by Trinh Cong Son.

The young man who composed the lines quoted above is in prison somewhere in South Vietnam. His crime was that he sang so passionately of his longing for peace that thousands of youngsters came to hear and applaud him and to join in his songs.* He is but one of the uncounted writers, poets, students, teachers, and other intellectuals in South Vietnam who are in jail or in exile, or who, pursued by the National Police, have had to go into hiding, because they dared to oppose the Saigon Government and to speak out for an end to the war.** Thich Nhat Hanh tells in his book, *Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, of the arrest and imprisonment of one hundred intellectuals and the exile of several others who had signed a petition asking for a negotiated peace between the Republic of South Vietnam and the NLF. Recently the Fellowship of Reconciliation received a communication from the General Association of Saigon Students, dated November 10, 1968, addressed to Student Unions of the Nations of the World, detailing Government attempts at suppression of their organization and of the incarceration of its members. The General Association of Saigon Students represents some 25,000 students of all religions and ideologies. It apparently has tried to steer a middle course between the Saigon regime and the NLF, as have other student organizations. Excerpts from the letter follow, along with other accounts of harassment of students and intellectuals.

From the November letter of the General Association of Saigon Students: "Shortly after (the April election of our executive committee), Saigon was faced with the second wave of offensive by the soldiers of the National Liberation Front, and we found ourselves devoting most of our time working to alleviate some of the victims' plight. At the beginning of June was born *Student*, published by the executive committee of GASS to serve as the official voice of the association. Half a month after the periodical came out (having been duly submitted to the censors as required by the authorities), the Government of Saigon suddenly declared us to be pro-Communists, Communist stooges, etc. On July 11, 1968, the police abducted our friend Nguyen Truong Cong, the publication's editor-in-chief and searched for co-ed Nguyen Thi To-Lien, its secretary general. Threatened with violence, other students went into hiding. Among them was Nguyen Dang Trung, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of GASS.

"On July 25, 1968, a special tribunal (this so-called tribunal has no legality) sentenced Cong to five years of forced labor On July 28, the National Police threw out a public call to Chairman

*College Press Service (Washington) Oct. 9, 1968, in a story signed by Tran Van Dinh, says that Trinh Cong Son, whom it describes as the "Bob Dylan of Vietnam," was arrested in late July or August by the military security police in Da Nang. He was arrested without warrant and is held without trial "in one of South Vietnam's numerous detention camps." CPS says: "Officially he was among the thousands of Vietnamese who 'disappear daily.'"

**See Vo Van Ai statement, Section II, John Sullivan's report, Section I, etc.

Trung. Promising lenience, it urged him to present himself without delay at its headquarters. . . .Trung ignored the urging, and on August 2, the same tribunal sentenced him to ten years of forced labor in absentia. GASS convened a press conference the following day to protest against this unjustified act, but police forces arrived to surround its headquarters in strength. On August 9, the police again arrested co-ed Dao Thi Nguyet Thanh and student Duong Van Day, both members of the University & High School Students for the Relief of War Victims. But they were soon released after 20 other students protested by fasting . .

"On September 14, 1968 . . .the National Police searched our office at 4 Duy Tan Street. Wreaking havoc amidst our documents and papers, they did not find whatever they looked for and instead arrested Nguyen Thanh Cong, Chairman of University & High School Students for the Relief of War Victims and Secretary General of the Representative Council of Saigon Students.

"On October 4, 1968 . . Cong was tried by a military tribunal, convicted of disturbing the peace and given three years of suspended sentence. The truth of the matter is that Cong has simply worked closely with the executive committee in organizing, on July 13 and September 8, sessions of discussions whose topic was 'Peace'. .and that he, among other representatives from other departments of the University, has signed the June 13, 1968, Appeal for Peace.

"Although Cong was given a suspended sentence, he was not released as required by the law. At the Chi Hoa prison, Cong protested this by fasting, the first time from October 10 to October 12, the second from October 14 to twenty days later . . Various individual students, members of GASS, workers, religious faithfuls, and even some congressmen publicly demanded that Cong be permitted to go free. . . .Instead, (he) was brought to an army induction center where he presently still remains, even though his draft deferment runs until December 15 of this year."

The letter goes on to say that on October 30, the Representative Council of Saigon Students released a statement demanding a cease-fire and peace negotiations. "This statement was signed by the representatives of the seven departments of the University. Three of the signers were arrested on the morning of November 9 . . . Other students, looked for by the police, have gone into hiding. Student leaders are presently living under constant threat and harassment, not knowing when their turn will come to be incarcerated."

From John Sullivan's October, 1968, report to AFSC: "In Saigon, even before Tet, there were some two to three thousand students under arrest, of all backgrounds, including Buddhists. Some were released, but after Tet they were rearrested. The exact number confined is impossible to learn. The government gave two reasons for arrests: (1) doubtful loyalty or (2) protective custody 'against the VC'. . A Buddhist student said that students in military training are divided into groups and the government has an agent in each. A few still speak out, but those who want to be active must act secretly. Seventeen students who held a press conference to protest the elections were arrested, then drafted, and now some are in the hands of the police; the families of others don't know where they are . . One is said to be on Con Son, the island prison off Saigon. A number of professors issued a statement before Tet and have been persecuted . . Some have fled, afraid to stay in their homes . . A leading Buddhist student said the government is suspicious of students for favoring peace . . He said (the students') confidence in the government is completely gone.

"A student leader recalled that Dr. Le Van Hao, head of the Allied Front for Democracy and Peace in Hue . . has disappeared. The government claims that this front is communist, he said, but its

supporters would number most of the people in Hue....He called the general mobilization a political, not a military device...said putting people in the army puts them under strict control and is useful to suppress student unrest."

Tin Tuong, newsletter of the Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Association, August, 1968: Describes a faculty strike and student non-violent demonstrations at University of Saigon, both violently suppressed by the security corps of the police. On October 2, 1967, the police suppressed another non-violent student demonstration, wounding several students with clubs, arresting thirty-three others. On the same day police "kidnapped" two pupils from the Bo De secondary school. Later, when student representatives went to the Prefecture of Police to demand the release of the 35 students, the Prefect said that seventeen would be led before a military tribunal. Five of the student leaders were said to have received sentences ranging from 22 to 27 years in prison; others were sent by force into the army.

The same issue of *Tin Tuong* reports a speech by a female student, Tran Thi Ngoc Hao, denouncing the careerist politicians who "forget the thousands of students still in prison."

Tin Tuong, April, 1967: Reports a governmental demand for a retraction by sixty-five university professors who had signed an appeal for a cease-fire the previous January. Apparently most of them refused the demand, because they were later reported to be in prison.

Letter from a Saigon correspondent, Nov. 13, 1968: Tells of a meeting with a woman student at Saigon University. "She is difficult to find because she never sleeps at home and moves around the different University buildings to avoid the police. However, she... arranged a lunch at her house, to which...came...several other students including a number who had been held by the police for eleven days in the summer. They take it all so calmly and bravelyThe chairman, of course, is still in prison...there were more arrests last Saturday morning. Three of the students...who ran more quickly than the police got away."

Letter from Hong Kong, June 12, 1968: "Pham Phi Long, the chairman of the Buddhist Students Association, was just arrested with a number of his colleagues."

Letter from Tam Ky, Vietnam, Oct. 20, 1968: "Many Buddhist High School students are being locked into jail without charge. It is said that they may have belonged to Mat Tran Lien Minh Hoa Binh Dan Tec, a new peace group which is popular among high school and university students."

Lotus in a Sea of Fire, by Thich Nhat Hanh, Hill & Wang, New York, 1967: Reports that after signing a petition in 1965 for stopping the war and the realization of peace, nearly one hundred writers, professors and other intellectuals were arrested and were still in prison. Three were deported to North Vietnam. A Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Lien, professor of the Faculty of Letters of Saigon University, was arrested in 1965 and sent to Thailand under custody of the Saigon embassy. He had started a peace organization.

York Gazette and Daily, June 28, 1967: Reported secret arrest of novelist and literary critic, Vu Hanh. Several weeks later, the police announced that he had confessed to "helping the communists," but refused all requests for copies of his confession. Another writer, Nguyen Si Hong, had been arrested early in June, without charges or admission of the arrest. Article stressed indifference of American officials.

"People who don't defend the national cause should not use the press. That is the whole government policy. I have to carry it out." – Ton That Thien, Minister of Information, Republic of South Vietnam.

In common with other authoritarian governments, that of South Vietnam uses censorship and suspension of printing rights to control the press. Ton That Thien's blunt statement quoted above, was implemented, during October and November of 1968, by the temporary or permanent closings of at least ten Saigon newspapers, none of them for reasons of military security. All newspapers, newsletters, leaflets, handbills, etc., must submit to constant censorship (see Thieu's "degree law" summarized in Section I of this report), and this censorship ranges from such absurdities as the prohibition of the use of the word "peace" for several weeks last spring, to complete suppression of vital news. Press censorship was officially abolished in April, 1967, when the new constitution went into effect, but it was, nevertheless, continued by a decision of Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, and has gone on ever since, as the reports below show.

New York Times, January 3, 1968, Saigon, (AP): Reported that South Vietnamese government had refused to renew visa of *Newsweek's* bureau chief in Saigon, Everett Martin, and had asked him to leave the country within seven days, because of *Newsweek* articles critical of Vietnamese army. Editor of *Newsweek* called the action "an unconscionable affront to the ideals of democracy and freedom for which the South Vietnamese Government professes to stand."

York Gazette and Daily, January 9, 1968, Saigon: Reports a thirty-day suspension of newspaper *Song*, one of Saigon's largest circulation papers (30,000), for allegedly confusing people about negotiations and insulting the President and the Congress. The paper ran an article saying that the war would be ended by negotiations within six months.

New York Times, January 11, 1968, Saigon: Reported that the government had issued a blunt warning to editors to stop publishing "groundless reports" or face suspension.

York Gazette and Daily, January 12, 1968, Saigon: Same story as above. This report added that some Vietnamese papers blurred and smudged several items the following day, reportedly about the resignations (denied by the government) of two military commanders, Gen. Cao Van Vien, chief of the Joint General Staff, and Lt. Gen. Le Nguyen Thang, the Third Corps commander.

New York Times, February 15, 1968, Saigon, (AP): Reported that South Vietnamese censors deleted President Johnson's statement that the United States was willing to meet with the enemy "tomorrow" and reaffirming his San Antonio peace formula.

New York Times, March 3, 1968, Saigon, (AP): Reported a three-week ban of *Newsweek* in Saigon for publishing articles critical of the Government.

New York Times, May 26, 1968, Saigon: Special report by Douglas Robinson takes note of increased censorship, and cites a headline reading "Pacification Hardly Touched by Second Red Offensive" from which "hardly touched" was deleted by censors because they thought it meant "hard hit."

Saigon Daily News, October 31, 1968, (AP): Story on suspension of newspapers, *Tu Do*, *Duoc Nho Nam*, and *Thoi Su Mien*, bringing to five the number of Vietnamese-language papers suspended within the last two days. *Duoc Nho Nam* and *Thoi Su Mien* were suspended permanently, for "articles that undermined the government."

Saigon Sunday News, December 10, 1968: Reported that the Information Ministry had withdrawn the publication license of the *Than Dan* daily, and temporarily suspended publication of two other dailies. *Than Dan* had carried an article in its November 7th issue claiming that the Government had "retarded the Paris peace talks". *Tin Sang*, a daily owned by Rep. Ngo Cong Duc, was suspended for one month because of a report on the leader of the NLF delegation in Paris, written, according to the Ministry of Information, so as to benefit the Communists. *Tien*, another daily, was suspended for fifteen days for a distortion of news.

New York Times, November 28, 1968, Saigon: Reported that *Song Moi*, a daily newspaper, lost its license to print because it said that President Thieu had made a "gigantic change of position" on the issue of the bomb halt of North Vietnam. On the same day, *Tieng Noi Dan Toc*, also a daily, was suspended for three days for publishing a picture of Ho Chi Minh on its front page.

York Gazette and Daily, December 13, 1968: Carried an article from the College Press Service, on the closing of the English-language daily, *Saigon Post*, for printing an article on a state of alert ordered by President Thieu because he thought Vice-President Ky and his supporters might be about to attempt a coup. The state of alert had been confirmed earlier by the Ministry of Information.

From John Sullivan's May, 1968, report to AFSC: "One distinguished nationalist showed me column after column which had been censored out, once even a whole page, of material that he had written for a Buddhist newspaper, *Than Chung*, which itself in 1966 was suppressed. Another example is the liberal Catholic journal, *Dat Nuoc*. One of its monthly issues last fall had 160 pages. In February, after Tet, there was no issue. A March-April combined issue was published with 95 pages. A magazine named *Bach Khoa* had nothing between pages 67 and 75 in its latest issue."

(Also see suppression of paper, *Student*, in Saigon, referred to in students' letter in Section III.)

Early in March, 1969, the Fellowship of Reconciliation received an urgent letter from a Saigon correspondent telling of the arrest of Thich Thien Minh, First Vice-President of the Buddhist Institute for Secular Affairs and one of the three most influential Buddhist leaders in South Vietnam.* Along with him were arrested about one hundred students at the Buddhist Youth Center in Saigon and the Center itself was searched and occupied by Government troops. The *New York Times* also reported this arrest.

On Sunday, March 16, 1969, the *New York Times* reported that Thich Thien Minh was sentenced to ten years' hard labor, after being charged with "giving refuge to traitors and illegal possession of weapons and documents." He was, moreover, to be brought before another military court on March 17 to be tried on two additional charges: giving aid and support to deserters and giving comfort to "disobedient people."

The real reason for Thich Thien Minh's arrest appears to be an attempt by the Government to silence the growing opposition to its policies among Buddhist leaders and laymen. In arresting Thich Thien Minh, the Government is simply carrying out its long-term policy (amply detailed in the White Paper) of suppressing all political dissent, but the severity of his sentence (the *Times* calls it "the stiffest ever given to a high-ranking Buddhist"), may be an indication that the Government is escalating its repressive tactics, as opposition itself escalates.

A letter from the Saigon Students Union, dated February 19, 1969, also reached us about two weeks ago. Sent by way of Paris, the

letter recapitulated earlier accounts of student arrests (see Section III of White Paper) and went on to tell of continuing governmental harrassment of students, as follows:

"On Christmas Eve, 1968, more than 2,000 students participated in a procession** held in the spirit of the message transmitted by the Pope, during which the torch of peace was borne aloft. This [procession] was clamped down on by the Government, and resulted in the arrests of hundreds.

"In the next few days, the Government, with the aim of rooting out all those holding the support and trust of the students, had kidnapped: Miss Huynh Quan Thu, General Secretary of the Saigon Students Union; Miss Dai Thi Nguyet Thanh, General Secretary of the Students Committee for the Relief of War Victims; Mr. Truong Van Khue, Mr. Tran Van Chi, and Mr. Tran Minh Duc, all representatives of Student Teachers; Mr. Pham Hao Quang, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Faculty of Science.

"More recently, the Government has interfered with elections of student representatives. Some examples of proof are: that Mr. Nguyen Dinh Mai was arrested within the Faculty of Science itself as he was campaigning for his own election; of the four groups up for election in the Faculty of Law, the whole of the fourth group was arrested.

"There are many other examples of individual students who have been arrested, exiled or tortured for their patriotism, and now the Government proceeds with its campaign of student arrests in Universities all over South Vietnam.

"In face of such a grave situation, we students of South Vietnam earnestly appeal to you — students, humanitarian movements, and people throughout the world — to continue in your support of our patriotic aspirations: that is, to bring independence, liberty, national sovereignty, and peace to Vietnam."

*The *New York Times* and other news media refer to the Buddhists headed by Thich Thien Minh, Thich Tri Quang, and Thich Tien Hoa, as "militant." The word is somewhat misleading, however, and they should not be thought of as "militaristic." Their philosophy is dedicated to non-violence and in their opposition to the government, they have never used military force.

**This was a Catholic demonstration. Father Nguyen Lan, a Redemptorist priest who has been outspoken in favor of peace, was also arrested during this demonstration, but has since been released.

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